

# A Public Education Campaign

**P**ublic education campaigns are a series of efforts designed to inform an audience about a specific issue. Campaigns vary in complexity depending upon their messages and the amount of time, resources and materials an agency has to commit to the effort. This workbook will help in the design and development of a number of different documents and events that, when combined, can form a cohesive public education campaign regarding the wise purchase, use and disposal of pesticides.

## Always Ask “So What?”

The main purpose of a public education campaign is to change behavior. To do that is a significant challenge, especially to entities such as yours that are often limited in funds and staffing. As you proceed with the concept of an outreach program, you should always test the elements by asking yourself “so what?” Ask yourself if you think the information that you are distributing, the partners you are enlisting, the speakers you are offering can make a clear, simple statement about what the consumer should change in his or her life, and why. The answer to the “why” is what will compel people to change habits. Perhaps the answer is, “because if you don’t, our water may not be safe.”



**If you’ve never created a public education campaign, this workbook will serve as a comprehensive guide. It will assist in determining your best audiences, help you to understand the best and most efficient elements of a campaign, guide you through working with the media, and help evaluate your efforts when they are complete. (Throughout the workbook, key summaries are highlighted in this manner.)**

If you have created a campaign in the past, or are currently involved in one, this workbook offers ideas to strengthen your efforts, including media relations, partnership building, youth education, and establishing a presence on the Internet. Consider enlisting partners for a program using bill inserts that reach your customers. Take the same information with the objective of source reduction (reducing the amount of potential hazardous wastes entering the environment) and partner with a local garden club that will extend the message to a more specific audience — one that is using garden products. This workbook will add to communications efforts you already employ.

There is no single formula for creating a public education campaign. Each program is unique based upon the audience, message, strategy and materials utilized during the campaign. This workbook will assist you in selecting these elements, and will help develop a program that fits both your needs and resources.

# The “Pros” of a Public Education Campaign

You have a wide variety of duties to perform at your facility and creating a public education campaign would mean more responsibility that you would have to take on. It is true that creating and implementing a campaign will take a certain amount of time and possibly money on your part. But these efforts have a number of benefits, both financially and in terms of how your POTW is viewed by customers and the community.

## Proper Disposal and Source Reduction

A pesticide public education campaign aims to educate consumers about the proper purchase, use and disposal of pesticide products. The campaign is an attempt to change consumers’ attitudes and behaviors when dealing with pesticide products around their homes. A successful campaign would result in a decrease in the amount of pesticides a consumer is using or disposing of improperly and may result in a decrease in the amount of pesticide residues that are showing up in your water samples.

## Reputation Management

Another benefit to conducting a public education campaign is the perception that your customers may have of your POTW. Implementing a public safety program is a proactive effort on your part, and your customers will recognize this fact. By administering this public education campaign you’re helping to inform customers how they can increase safety around their homes. Customers appreciate being informed on issues that directly contribute to their health and well-being. This kind of goodwill and community relations can serve you well in times of controversy.

Agencies at the local, state and national level have created public outreach campaigns that have shown measurable results in changing consumers’ attitudes and behaviors. This workbook should reduce the amount of time and start-up effort required to develop and administer a public education campaign. The materials here have been created to specifically target consumers who use pesticide products. With all of this information available to you, the question becomes, how will you create your public education campaign?

# Using the Workbook as Your Guide

This workbook has been designed to assist you in all levels of creating and maintaining your public education campaign. It will help you understand the elements of a public education campaign.

The workbook has been separated into three main parts:



## Section 1



Focuses on the planning portion of the campaign.

This includes information on how to determine what you need to conduct a campaign, explanations of the target audiences, and a guide to gaining your employees' support for the program.

## Section 2



Guides you through the various tactics you can use to implement a public education campaign. This section assists in dealing with the media, creating programs for youth, establishing a speakers bureau, and participating in special events.

## Appendix A



Supplies explanations of the printed materials you can use during your campaign. Also available in this section are camera-ready materials for reproduction.

Within each section are sub sections marked for easy identification. The binder has been constructed in a way that allows you to easily select elements for your public education campaign. Each aspect of the campaign, from assessment through evaluation, is covered in this workbook. An index has also been provided to give you another resource for looking up specific elements of the campaign.

# Organizing Your Public Education Campaign

An effective campaign is one that has been well thought out and planned to present clear and consistent messages. From an organizational standpoint, a public education campaign can be divided into four essential parts:



## **Assessment:**

looking at what has been done and what you want to do in the future.



## **Creation:**

putting together all of the elements that you will use during your campaign.



## **Implementation:**

actually conducting the campaign.



## **Evaluation:**

looking back over what has been done and analyzing the results.

By planning the campaign in multiple phases, you will better understand how the overall process works. It is important to remember that each of these sections contributes to the overall campaign. The parts do not operate separately; they are intertwined to create the entire public education campaign. As an example of a complete program, consider the Blue Thumb program that was created by the

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the American Waterworks Association, and which has been used by agencies such as the Oklahoma Conservation Commission.

The Blue Thumb program is an educational program addressing pollution prevention and water quality. The program's extensive Web site ([www.awwa.org/bluethum.htm](http://www.awwa.org/bluethum.htm)) houses the various parts of the program. The program includes a large selection of information sheets on integrated pest management (IPM) and proper pesticide use. The Blue Thumb Web site includes a "tip of the month" section, a "bloopers" page of unwise water use, and children's games that reinforce the campaign's themes. The program has its own press materials, fact sheets, an extensive selection of giveaway items, and camera-ready artwork for special events such as Drinking Water Week.

Every aspect of the Blue Thumb campaign features its distinctive logo and consistent messages. The campaign has a variety of materials and information, but it is all unified under the larger campaign. In creating your own campaign, you should work toward the same type of effort with a variety of materials that promote an overall theme and key messages.

# POTW Research as a Guideline

The California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) commissioned a survey of the state's POTWs to evaluate how best to conduct an expanded public outreach program targeted to residents and businesses to reduce improper handling and disposal of pesticides. The survey results have guided the creation of this workbook.

It is interesting to note that one-third of the respondents to the survey had conducted public outreach programs in the past. These districts had used their outreach programs to educate the public within the two years preceding the survey. The most common elements utilized were exhibits and bill inserts. Public service announcements (PSAs), brochures for reprinting and point-of-purchase materials were perceived to be the most valuable informational materials for outreach programs.

When asked about the most effective program a POTW had administered, the message focused on proper disposal of pesticides (followed by environmental protection). Besides the popular bill inserts, radio and television were deemed to be the most effective methods for communicating with the general public. Even though exhibits and presentations were used extensively, they were infrequently cited as the best methods.



**A somewhat greater number of respondents indicated that a generic outreach program created by DPR for use by service areas was preferable to a statewide program conducted by DPR. Of the respondents, nearly 80 percent believed that an outreach campaign would be either “very valuable” or “somewhat valuable.” This workbook will serve as a useful aid in self-administration of regional/district efforts.**

This research helped shape our recommendations on materials used in an outreach program, while we tempered a good dose of “reality” on methods to reach an audience. Radio and television advertising might be very effective, but it is often out of reach for a typical POTW budget. A more detailed discussion of the findings of the survey is in the Appendix.

# Using the *H<sub>2</sub>O Home to Ocean* Theme

Public education campaigns are strengthened when they contain a unified message that becomes easily identifiable with the project. The message, or theme, of the campaign will help tie the various elements together and will allow people to easily recognize and remember the program. With the addition of a simple and easily identifiable logo, the program begins to build a consistent identity throughout the campaign.

This workbook contains various print materials that contain the theme *H<sub>2</sub>O Home to Ocean*. This theme, and its corresponding logo, has been created to give you camera-ready materials that you can use as part of your own campaign. The *H<sub>2</sub>O Home to Ocean* theme intends to get consumers thinking about the fact that their homes have a connection to the water system extending all the way to the ocean.



**Consumers may think that once they pour pesticides down the drain, the products cease to be harmful and have no other impact on the environment. They may also think that because it is legal to purchase and use pesticides, then they must be safe to dump in the drain. For many of these consumers, out of sight is out of mind. The goal of the *H<sub>2</sub>O Home to Ocean* theme is to get consumers to recognize the potentially harmful impact pesticides can have when they are not used correctly or disposed of properly.**

**The theme aims to get consumers thinking about the link between what they use in their home and how it impacts the rest of the environment.**



The *H<sub>2</sub>O Home to Ocean* logo and materials were created specifically for this project. Space has been left on all camera-ready materials for you to include

your organization's name and contact information. The logo can be used on a variety of materials in different sizes, but it should not be altered from its original format (that is, you may print it larger or smaller, but we ask you not to change the proportions, the graphics, or the type font). If you'd like to print the logo in color, we request that it be produced in PMS (Pantone Matching System) 322C.

If you decide to use the *H<sub>2</sub>O Home to Ocean* materials as part of your campaign, we would encourage you to use the logo on all of the materials you create and distribute. This helps give the public education project a cohesive look, and one that builds consumer awareness through repetition and consistency.